

CHINA'S ENGLISH A HISTORY OF ENGLISH IN CHINESE EDUCATION

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香港大學出版社

HONG KONG UNIVERSITY PRESS

Hong Kong University Press
14/F Hing Wai Centre
7 Tin Wan Praya Road
Aberdeen
Hong Kong

© Hong Kong University Press 2004

ISBN 962 209 663 8

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Secure On-line Ordering

<http://www.hkupress.org>

Printed and bound by Liang Yu Printing Factory Ltd., Hong Kong, China.

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1

Introduction

Point of departure

In 1983, I took up a teaching post in Taiyuan, Shanxi Province in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Soon after my arrival, I was being shown around the city by one of my students, Mr Liu, and we chatted about his school days. They had been disrupted by the Cultural Revolution, a period of massive social and political upheaval, and at that time, Mr Liu told me, he had joined the local Red Guards, the juvenile revolutionaries, and participated in various activities. He took me to see his former secondary school, where he indicated a third-storey window in the teachers' dormitories. That, he said, was the window from which the Red Guards had pushed their English Language teacher to his death. 'Why?' I asked. Mr Liu shrugged, 'Because he taught English.' This was my first intimation of the historically controversial, even deadly, status of English in China.

This revelation was subsequently reinforced by colleagues in Taiyuan and educators from around the country, many of whom had suffered during the Cultural Revolution. One recalled how he was accused of being an imperialist spy, simply because of his competence in English. Another recalled hearing her neighbour being beaten to death by the Red Guards for refusing to burn his treasured stamp collection that included British and Australian stamps.

Several months after my tour with Mr Liu, I was crossing the college grounds after class when I met a little boy, aged about six, who lived in a neighbouring courtyard. He greeted me with a cheerful 'Hello!' and proceeded to chat for a while in Chinese. I was surprised when he suddenly asked, 'Are foreigners good people?' Not having the linguistic resources to cope with this question in detail, I replied, 'Most are good — and we're good friends, aren't we?' He paused for thought and then said, 'Yes ... but why did you start the Opium War?' This was another forceful reminder that China has had a troubled relationship with English speakers: at different times in history,

the language has been associated with military aggressors with technologically superior weapons, barbarians who ransacked imperial palaces, imperialists who seized chunks of Chinese sovereign territory and virulent anti-Communists who denounced the 'Yellow Peril'.

The perceived threat posed by the English language¹ to political, economic and social systems in China is one reason why, ever since the teaching of English began there, it has vacillated between high and low status, as indeed have all foreign languages since the Tang dynasty (Ross, 1993). In imperial times, the emperor ruled as a sovereign godhead in a hierarchical social system that combined politics and religion; erosion of power threatened the very fabric of the state. It was a system built around the notions of harmony and benevolent government, which included the observance of religious rites (Chen Li Fu, 1986). English represented very different values: it was the language of missionaries who preached Christian religions, some antagonistically denouncing Chinese beliefs and practices; of philosophers who propounded alternative social systems; of governments who pursued aggressive foreign policies; of peoples who, the Chinese believed, lacked the sophistication and refinement that a long history of unified nationhood and, in earlier times, of technological superiority bestowed upon the Chinese people. Indeed, it has been argued (e.g., Liao, 1990) that the fall of the last emperor was hastened by the controversies over how to deal with the powerful and aggressive foreign forces that were seeking to open up China for trade. And without the binding force of the imperial system, four decades of turbulence followed before the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) established the PRC in 1949.

Paradoxically, since the Chinese military was embarrassed by Western weaponry, scholars and officials in the mid-nineteenth century (and periodically thereafter) called for the learning of English to be promoted in China (Teng and Fairbank, 1979). Their aim was national self-strengthening: English would provide access to Western technology and scientific expertise (Teng and Fairbank, 1979), and it was argued that, with care, cultural erosion might be avoided. There was an added political tension after 1949, until China embraced economic reforms in the late 1970s. The English language, although desirable for national economic development in China, was perceived to embody values that were undesirable and antithetical to the nature of Chinese culture and the ideology of the CCP (Dzau, 1990). One manifestation of this was the Campaign against Spiritual Pollution (*qingchu jinshen wuran*) in the mid-1980s that targeted vices such as pornography, gambling, prostitution and even disco dancing, which were portrayed as slipping into China through the open door of international trade. As a teacher in Taiyuan at the time, I was requested by the college authorities to desist from using Western songs as teaching material and my students were warned to minimize their interactions with me to matters of grammar and pedagogy.

Nevertheless, the growth of English in China has been phenomenal. Official records for 1957 show that there were just 843 secondary school teachers of English in the whole country (Ministry of Education, 1984). Yet, despite the traumatic experiences of the Cultural Revolution and other political movements with anti-Western elements, Chinese people have embraced the study of English in recent decades with fervour. Some 50 million schoolchildren are currently learning English, taught by approximately 400,000 teachers. The figures are increasing as more and more primary schools around the nation offer the subject, and as more and more teachers take up the challenge of teaching through English across the curriculum, as part of the 'bilingual education' policy that promotes the teaching of science and maths in secondary schools through the medium of English. English competence is a key component in the tertiary level entrance examinations, a factor that enhances the status of the subject on the school curriculum. Private tutelage and tuition schools offering English courses for schoolchildren and the general public abound, popping up like bamboo shoots after spring rain, to use a Chinese metaphor. English is desirable because it is the language of trade partners, investors, advisers, tourists and technical experts, and these economic imperatives have been enhanced by China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the awarding of the Olympic Games to Beijing in 2008.

My personal experiences as a teacher and textbook writer in China have afforded privileged access to a range of experiences. After training teachers of English in Taiyuan, I became involved in textbook development, teacher education programmes and research projects nationwide. In 1994, I visited the library in the People's Education Press (PEP), the curriculum development and publications unit in the Ministry of Education in Beijing, which has a rare, if not unique, collection of syllabuses and textbooks dating from 1949. The materials for the English Language curriculum on a secluded shelf seemed to encapsulate in a fascinating way the vagaries of China's development since 1949. Gradually, this book evolved from finding these materials. I wanted to investigate their story: the processes by which these syllabuses and textbooks had come to exist and, in most cases, then fall into disuse, and to analyse the ideas, values, and pedagogies that they incorporated. PEP officials offered generous encouragement and support for the study, and this access allowed me to build up my own collection of curriculum materials and to talk to key people who were directly involved in their production.

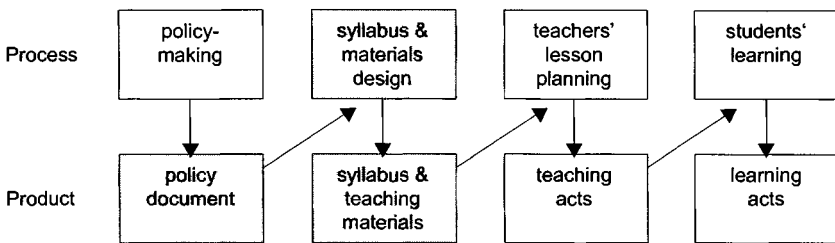
Analytical approach

This book explores the complex interplay of political, economic, social and educational factors that have shaped the history of English in China, with

particular emphasis on the period after the founding of the PRC in 1949. The main focus is on the formal education system, most notably the English Language curriculum in junior secondary schools, on the grounds that the study of curriculum policy, including the processes of curriculum development and the products — syllabuses and textbooks — at the national level by the Ministry of Education, allows insights into the construction of an 'official' English, as well as what was considered as acceptable content in English. The book examines how, at times of heightened political tension, the state has sought to restrict the social and political impact of the language by controlling the English Language curriculum in formal education. On the other hand, the state has promoted English Language when economic development through international engagement has been a national priority. However, the findings of this book suggest that it would not be accurate to describe the shifting status of the language in the curriculum in terms of a pendulum swinging from one extreme to the other — as has been suggested by some researchers regarding general education policy in China, such as Chen Hsien's (1981) portrayal of swings between 'academic' (i.e., related to citizenship training and human resource development for economic modernization) and 'revolutionary' (i.e., ideologically-oriented) education; or a 'moderate' to 'radical' pendulum (Ruyen, 1970, cited in Löfstedt, 1980). Politicization of state policy does not mean a total neglect of economic concerns, and economic modernization does not mean that other agenda are absent. Instead, there is a contestation of economic, political, and social goals, resulting in tensions and negotiated outcomes. The nature of this contestation and subsequent outcomes has varied over time, but the general thrust towards an acceptance of English and of the need for cultural awareness has continued progressively throughout the period since 1949, with the exception of the Cultural Revolution. The fortunes of foreign language curricula, argues Ross (1992: 240), are a 'barometer of modernization', in that they register changes in pressure exerted by the prevailing socio-political climate. English, being particularly controversial, makes it a sensitive barometer.

This book uses the junior secondary school English Language curriculum as the means to examine how curriculum developers and textbook writers have confronted the shifting ambiguities and dilemmas concerning English. The reasons for selecting the junior secondary school curriculum arise partly from convenience (my involvement in curriculum development was at this level), partly from importance (curriculum developers in the PEP told me that most innovations in the English curriculum in China have been initiated at this level, and it is the stage of schooling, Year 7 to Year 9, at which most students have studied English) and partly from the need to limit the scope of the study to book length. The book asks fundamental questions concerning the English promoted by the state in China. What role has been ascribed to English, and how has it changed over time? What are the characteristics of this English,

and how have they changed over time? What are the explanations for such changes? What has been viewed as appropriate content for English textbooks? The analysis adopted for this study looks at the process of curriculum development as well as the product: the nature of the curriculum as constructed by the PEP. The relationship between the two levels is shown in Figure 1.1. Studying the process — identifying the stakeholders and their contributions; sorting out the priorities; and observing how tensions were handled — illuminates the contemporary social climate and values and how they impinged upon the construction of a state English. Studying the product reveals the nature of this English. Analysing the changes over time brings out strongly the particular features of China's English.



Note: Shaded area represents the main focus of this book.

Figure 1.1 Steps in curriculum decision-making (adapted from Johnson, 1989)

The study is located in the areas of the PEP's involvement in curriculum development. Despite its title as a press, the role of PEP has been to interpret state policy and operationalize it in the form of a syllabus and textbooks for individual subjects. The PEP forms a bridge between the macro-level of state policy and the micro-level of curriculum implementation in schools. Recent studies of curriculum development in China have described the complex interplay between macro- and micro-levels, thereby challenging the common portrayal of a homogeneous process, dominated by the central authorities and essentially centre-periphery in nature (e.g., Leung, 1989; Paine, 1992; Lai, 1994). Leung (1991) describes the process as 'democratic centralism'. Paine (1992) contends that the actual formulation of contemporary national educational policies has a strongly pluralistic quality through a process of *mosuo* (literally 'groping' or muddling through), whereby policies are formulated in the light of successful experiments at the grassroots and 'an evolutionary compromise' is achieved between central bureaucratic objectives and the practical lessons of local experience. While this book identifies the nature of shifts in the socio-political climate and their effect on issues of curriculum design and pedagogy in English Language teaching

at the macro-level, the primary focus is on how the PEP charts a course between competing and often conflicting forces that arise at both the macro- and micro-level. Little research work has been done in the field of English Language curriculum development in the PRC, either by Chinese or international scholars. Within the PRC, a large number of journals are devoted to aspects of English Language teaching, but they tend to be descriptive and prescriptive, being principally designed to promulgate the particular pedagogy associated with a new innovation. How the PEP handles the politically sensitive issues and questions of socio-economic policy linked to English Language curriculum development has rarely been investigated: the papers on this topic surveyed for this book were all written by members of the PEP, and tended to avoid critical analysis.

The second aspect of reform, the nature of the curriculum as constructed by the curriculum developers, will be approached principally through analyses of the English Language textbooks produced by the PEP, which, in China, are the main manifestation of the intended curriculum. The PEP's task of interpreting the policy statements of the politicians and translating them into curriculum documents (such as syllabuses or textbooks) that will be used in schools is both a sensitive one, given the often volatile nature of policy statements and the historically ambivalent official attitudes towards the English language, and a difficult one, for the skills, resources and support for English Language teaching in schools place constraints on policy formulation and on the implementation of policy. Added to this is the influence of experts in the field, including specialists in applied linguistics in tertiary institutions and foreign consultants; and, as emerged from this study as it developed, of teachers, whose acceptance of new materials and pedagogies was vital to the success of any curriculum reform. The political and educational forces are often in conflict, and the PEP had to navigate a mediating course, not just through the conflicting currents of the political ('red') and economic ('expert') policy streams, but also through various competing pedagogies, to produce a syllabus and teaching materials suitable for English Language instruction and learning in Chinese schools.

The especially contentious 'desirable evil' that the English language has represented to China makes it an excellent case study of how the state handles tensions in the school curriculum, as it throws into particularly sharp relief the processes that exist for this purpose. The issue of cultural transfer (and the potential for cultural erosion that is involved in the promotion of the study of English) is a central theme to the book — how the Chinese government, through the Ministry of Education, has handled the 'foreignness' of English since 1949. This book argues that a guiding principle of selective assimilation has been applied to different degrees at different times by Chinese authorities to questions of international transfer in many fields for the past 100 years or more, and has been applied to the English Language curriculum in the various

socio-political and economic climates of the different phases of history since 1949.

How has the role and status ascribed to English in the education system in China changed over time? To answer this question, evidence for the official role of English is drawn from policy documents, such as those relating to curriculum; policy actions, such as the setting up of new institutions; and policy debates. The question of status is more problematic. In this book, attention is given to both the official and popular status of English, to the relevant weighting given to English Language study in the curriculum of state educational institutions, and to the use of English in society. The attribute of 'low' status is applied in this analysis to the status of English when state policy reflected the view that the cultural or political threat of the language was greater than the technological benefits that its study might bring. Higher status is thus attributable when the balance of state policy was more inclined towards a positive view of English. Reference will also be made to popular attitudes towards the English language when these seem to be at variance with official attitudes.

Although the book is largely about language issues, it also touches on political, social and educational matters that are only tangentially related to the English Language curriculum in China. For instance, the analysis of the decision-making processes employed in the various curriculum innovations indicates how China has handled the relations between the centre and the periphery in education and other spheres of political activity. This centre-periphery tension has, historically, been an important factor in the history of Chinese politics, given the size of the country and the diversity of regional interests and ethnic backgrounds.

Major sources of data were key informants — Tang Jun, Liu Daoyi, Liu Jinfang and Neville Grant. Tang Jun had been involved in English Language curriculum development with the PEP from the early 1960s and, after the Cultural Revolution, had served as project leader for the curriculum reforms in 1978 and 1982. Liu Daoyi, who had been involved in the PEP work in the 1960s as a consultant, joined the PEP staff in 1977, and took over as project leader for the development of the 1993 curriculum. Liu Jinfang, who joined in 1977, was another long-serving member of staff at the PEP. Another key informant was from outside the PEP — Neville Grant, a textbook author working for Longman International, who had been the principal writer of the textbook series for the 1993 curriculum. I have also drawn on my own experiences as a member of the team of textbook writers working under Liu Daoyi and Grant.²

The data from key informants were complemented by an analysis of textbooks (in particular), syllabuses, and related curriculum documents, which were obtained from the PEP and other sources, such as the archives of colleagues in China and my own archives. Apple and Christian-Smith (1991)

highlight the important role of textbook in the education process, suggesting that, in general, the curriculum as experienced by most learners is defined more closely by textbooks rather than syllabuses and other documents. Venezky (1992) argues that textbooks are both cultural and curricular artefacts, possessing an intertextuality that links them to their antecedents and a validation bestowed by various mechanisms, such as production quality (binding, design, typography, etc.), or by association with the authorship and affiliation of authors, or by implications of improvement and currency by labels such as 'revised edition'. As a cultural artefact, the nature of textbooks is circumscribed to some extent by social, economic and technical conditions, such as contemporary printing techniques:

... texts are not simply "delivery systems" of "facts". They are at once the results of political, economic, and cultural activities, battles, and compromises. They are conceived, designed, and authored by real people with real interests. They are published within the political and economic constraints of markets, resources and power. And what texts mean and how they are used are fought over by communities with distinctly different commitments and by teachers and students as well. (Apple and Christian-Smith, 1991: 1-2)

As a curricular artefact, textbooks reflect the intended curriculum, as well as the promoted pedagogical approaches, either explicit (e.g., presentations of concepts to be grasped) or implicit (the nature and arrangement of exercises, for example), and a hidden curriculum (such as the values and meanings of the dominant culture) (Cherryholmes, 1988; Venezky, 1992). It is this view of textbooks as reflections of pedagogical constructs and socio-political values that forms the basis of the analysis of PRC textbook resources adopted in this study. The analysis recognizes that English Language curriculum products are shaped by considerations relating to three components at the level of design (adapted from White, 1988), which are:

- pedagogy: explicit and/or implicit beliefs and practices for teaching and learning;
- linguistic components: grammar, vocabulary, and language skills (e.g., reading, writing, listening and speaking);
- content: situational contexts and topics, including political and moral messages.

Taken individually, but especially when interconnected as a coherent whole, each component contributes to an understanding of the nature and role of English in China (Figure 1.2).

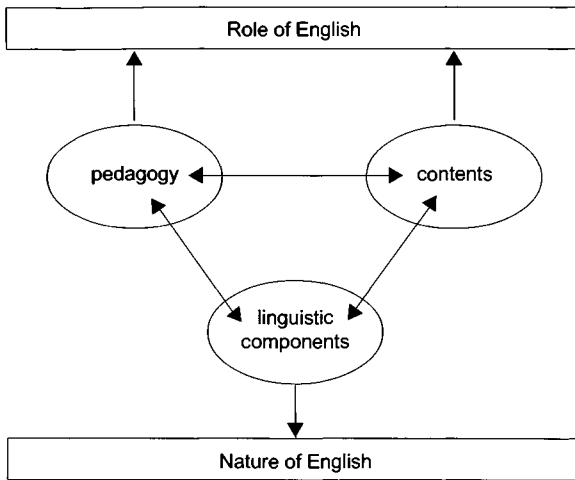


Figure 1.2 Curriculum analysis and China's English

Pedagogy

The pedagogical approach underpinning a curriculum and its related textbook resources is informative as it shows the orientation of the curriculum towards particular goals. In the case of English Language, the goals might be fostering the students' competence in oral and written English in order to produce people capable of communicating with English-speaking foreigners, or transmitting grammatical knowledge about language to develop the students' reading skills in order for them to gain access to scientific or technical information. Table 1.1 (see p. 10) shows the features of some of the more common pedagogical approaches to English Language teaching that have been identified in China and elsewhere. Each is responding to different social needs. The lack of clear pedagogical principles might indicate that priorities lay elsewhere — political indoctrination, for example. While explicit statements about pedagogy might be found in the syllabus or teacher's reference book, analysis of components such as the nature and role of grammar, and the degree of realism in the discourse can provide implicit evidence as to the pedagogy.

The use of more realistic or less realistic discourse in textbooks can be associated with different forms of English Language pedagogy. The term *discourse* has various connotations, but for the purposes of this book, it is used in the sense of a 'naturally occurring stretch of language, spoken or written' (Carter, 1993: 22), with some qualifications as noted below. *Realistic*, as used in this study, refers to the naturalness of the language in the discourse, irrespective of its actual origin. Thus a passage written by the textbook author in the form of someone else's diary would be analysed in this study as 'strongly

Table 1 1 Prevalent English language pedagogical approaches (adapted from Tang Lixing, 1983, Larsen-Freeman, 1986, Richards and Rodgers, 1986, Clark, 1987, Zhou and Weng, 1995)

Name	Focus	Pedagogy	Curriculum	Orientation/Values System
Grammar-Translation Method (from 18th century)	language forms, reading and writing	transmission of knowledge, teacher-centred, memorization of grammatical paradigms, translation	linear grading from what is thought to be simple to complex	academic rationalism, access to literature and other written forms of language
Structural Approach (from 19th century)	grammar in context, mainly reading and writing access to literature	transmission of knowledge, teacher as presenter and monitor, grammar focus, then creative production, use of mother tongue	linear grading starting with what is thought to be most useful/generalizable	academic rationalism, access to the language systems
Direct Method (from turn of 20th century)	communication in context, listening, speaking, reading and writing	teacher- and student-centred, inductive learning of grammar, no use of mother tongue	cyclical, experiential learning, grading by students' needs and ability	social and economic efficiency, communicative competence to use language in society
Audiolingual Method (from late 1950s)	sentence patterns, listening and speaking, then reading & writing	language learnt through behaviourist techniques teacher orchestrates students, habit-formation, no use of mother tongue	linear grading starting with what is thought to be most useful/generalizable	social and economic efficiency, communicative competence to use language in society
Functional/Notional Approach (from late 1970s)	communication in context, integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing	language learnt through modelling, teacher as manager and helper, grammar focus, then creative production, use of mother tongue	linear grading starting with what is thought to be most useful/generalizable	social and economic efficiency, communicative competence to use language in society
Task-Based Learning (from 1990s)	holistic and purposeful communication, integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing	learning generic skills through language, student autonomy, teacher as manager and helper, providing input as needed, use of mother tongue	task as organizing focus, based on students' needs, interests and abilities, grammar and vocabulary support task completion	various social and economic efficiency, social reconstructionism and/or individualism
Eclectic Approach	communication, listening, speaking, reading and writing skills	learning about language and generic skills through language, teacher as selector of strategies, habit-formation and cognitive learning, use of mother tongue	grading by students' needs and ability	various academic rationalism, social and economic efficiency, social reconstructionism and/or individualism

realistic' if the discourse displays the features of a real diary (in terms of format, topics, etc.), even though the diary was actually pseudo-realistic — i.e. written specifically for the textbook. The research focuses on the discourse contained in the textbooks, including the printed discourse that is intended to represent spoken language. Strongly realistic discourse is linked to pedagogies such as the Direct Method that stress communicative language use. Although there may be a concern to develop students' accuracy at an early stage, such a pedagogy will quickly move to a stronger degree of realism. Other approaches, such as the Structural Approach, spend longer developing students' accuracy in language use, and so strongly realistic discourse tends not to be important until later in a course. The correspondences between various pedagogies and the degree of realistic discourse shown in Table 1.2 do not imply that the degree of discourse realism exists in a precise one-to-one relationship with individual views of language learning and pedagogy. However, it is believed that realism serves as a contributory indicator, when combined with other evidence, in building up a composite picture of the views of language learning and pedagogy underpinning the textbooks.

Table 1.2 English language pedagogy and discourse

Pedagogy	Discourse
Grammar-Translation Method	realism increases as focus moves from sentence to whole-passage level
Direct Method	strong realism from early stages
Audiolingual Method	weak/medium realism, as repetition of structures can be unnatural language use
Structural Approach	weak/medium realism when focus is on discrete grammar items
Functional/Notional Approach	strong realism from early stage when focus is on contextualized language use
Task-based learning	strong realism from early stage when focus is on contextualized language use
Eclectic Approach	weak/medium realism when focus is on discrete grammar items; strong when focus is on contextualized language use

The analysis of realism in discourse hinges upon contextualization. Carter (1993) differentiates between external and internal context. External context refers to the non-linguistic environment in which the discourse is located, while internal context refers to the linguistic environment and the inter-relationship between linguistic components. This study mainly looks at the external context, and the extent that the non-linguistic environment is explicit. Four guiding questions (and Q4 primarily) were used:

- Q1. Are the participants in the discourse and their relationship made clear?
 Q2. Is the setting (place and time) of the communicative event made evident?
 Q3. Is the purpose of the communicative event made clear?
 Q4. Is the language of the discourse appropriate to the external context as defined in the answers to the first three questions?

The realism of the written and spoken discourse in the textbooks is analysed on a three-point scale: strong, medium and weak. 'Strong' discourse has a high degree of realism, while 'weak' discourse shows little realism. Figure 1.3 shows the relationship between strong, medium and weak discourse. Strongly realistic discourse is, or is similar to, language of the real world, and comprises sentences or utterances put together in order to achieve communication; weakly realistic discourse is primarily concerned with presenting discrete linguistic components, such as a grammatical structure, for the students to master. The 'medium' category is for discourse that is quite communication-oriented, but the language is still tightly controlled (for example, a number of structures reoccur, but not to the extent as to render the discourse as 'weak'). As with the analysis of political and moral messages outlined below, the judgements made regarding discourse are subjective, being based on my experience in textbook writing and language teaching. To enhance the reliability of the findings, three English Language specialists carried out an independent analysis of a random sample of passages. Each specialist was given twenty-five extracts in total taken from various textbook series. They were asked to analyse the degree of realism of the discourse on the three-point scale ('weak', 'medium' and 'strong') to validate my construct analysis. In the event, the process resulted in some adjustments to some of my judgements.

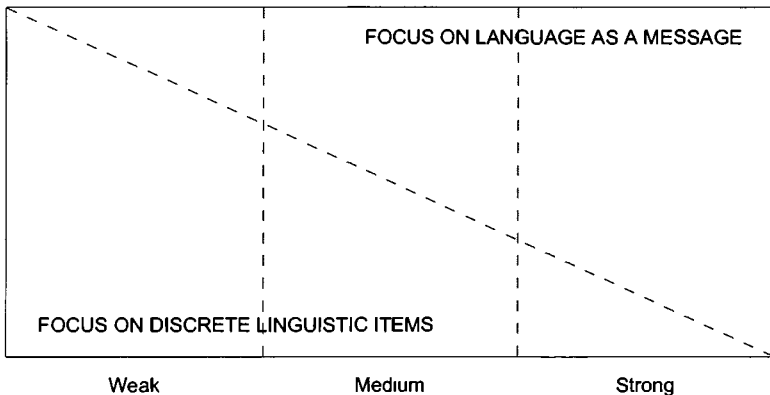


Figure 1.3 Weak, medium and strong discourse as a continuum (adapted from Littlewood, 1993)

Linguistic components

Linguistic components include grammatical items, vocabulary and functional/notional items. The selection and organization of these components are indicative of the views of language learning and pedagogy that influence a particular series (McDonough and Shaw, 1993). For example, the sequencing of grammatical items indicates whether such items have been controlled, or whether they have been introduced randomly. A controlled sequence suggests that the textbook writers believe that language learning requires some form of progression in terms of grammatical input, be it linear, cyclical or otherwise. A random, uncontrolled sequence may suggest a naturalistic immersion approach to language learning (such as might be associated with the Direct Method) or maybe a lack of attention on the part of the textbook writers to such pedagogical aspects. The association between English Language pedagogies and the organization of linguistic components is shown in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3 English language pedagogy and linguistic components

Pedagogy	Linguistic Components
Grammar-Translation Method	grammar and vocabulary initially controlled, then dependent on passage complexity
Direct Method	grammar, vocabulary and functions/notions dependent on context
Audiolingual Method	grammar and vocabulary controlled; functions/notions dependent on context
Structural Approach	grammar and vocabulary controlled; functions/notions dependent on context
Functional/Notional Approach	functions/notions, grammar and vocabulary controlled based on context
Task-based Learning	functions/notions, grammar and vocabulary controlled based on context
Eclectic Approach	functions/notions, grammar and vocabulary controlled based on context

The selection of vocabulary items can similarly reflect the attention paid to controlled input, which, in turn, is indicative of attention to pedagogical concerns. A simple indication of this is the number of new vocabulary items included in each lesson: a large number indicates a lack of control, either deliberate or unwitting, and a greater concern for transmitting political or moral messages than for primarily catering to the capabilities of students to master

the vocabulary. Alternatively, the number of new vocabulary items may be indicative of the intended pedagogy. For instance, pedagogies such as the Functional/Notional Approach which feature more strongly realistic discourse are less likely to have a high degree of controlled vocabulary, as this would restrict the potential for realism. Functional/notional items are elements of discourse that serve a communicative purpose. They range from simple utterances, such as apologizing or telling the time, to longer stretches of language, such as arranging a meeting or arguing. A wide range of functional/notional items in a textbook series would suggest a strong orientation towards communication as the main goal of language learning and the Functional/Notional Approach, or other similar methods, as the intended pedagogy (White, 1988).

Content

For the analysis of messages in the textbooks, the study draws on the categorization (*political, moral and nil*) of messages used by Ridley, Godwin and Doolin (1971) in their analysis of the moral orientation of the set of Chinese Language readers for primary school students published in the 1960s prior to the Cultural Revolution. Their study found three distinct categories of passages:

1. informational passages: often politicized, about hygiene, physiology, basic science and agriculture;
2. specifically indoctrinal passages: moulding attitudes towards the nation, the CCP, foreign countries, republican China, and often containing issues relating to social and international conflict; and
3. behavioural modelling passages: anecdotes and biographies of heroes and their deeds for emulation.

Ridley, Godwin and Doolin concluded that the content of these textbooks was:

... clearly relevant to a predominantly agricultural society that is consciously attempting not only to transform itself into a modern, industrial society, but also one that is attempting, through education of its masses, to eradicate an old social order and to establish a new society based on radically different principles. (p. 20)

This involves attention to both economics-oriented and politics-oriented education. In the early to mid-1960s, this meant that:

[t]he Chinese education system is charged with producing citizens to be used in the modernization of the state with both specific levels of expertise and a deep, extremely personal commitment to Mao Tse-tung. (pp. 5–6)

Kwong (1985) and Price (1979) reached similar conclusions on the moral and political contents of later textbooks. Kwong examined textbooks for Chinese Language throughout the Cultural Revolution and its immediate aftermath, and traced the changes in the socio-political climate that are reflected in the passages in various series of textbooks. She identified the abundance of political content (including eulogies of Chairman Mao and anti-capitalist diatribes) during times of mass mobilization; the moral messages advocating patriotism and diligence in study; and the later attention (when political activism had reduced) to academic skills and a more realistic portrayal of children's lifestyle. Her study concludes that analysis of language textbooks in a highly politicized society like China can reveal who formed the dominant leadership, as well as 'the assumptions and basis of China's political infrastructure, the continuities and changes in her political culture, her leaders' plans and priorities' (pp. 206–7). Price (1979) reviewed the contents of textbooks in Chinese Language and English in terms of scope of materials and intended pedagogy. For Chinese Language, Price notes that the textbooks from the late 1950s have a carefully structured linguistic syllabus, together with strong moral-political content:

The content of the textbook is serious and moral, with almost no reference, in those studied, to play of any kind. Pleasure is to be found in hard work and in helping other people. Happy children must sit up in class and co-operate with the teacher in their studies; wash their clothes and help in the house; or join in the work of harvesting the crops. Next to earnest work, the message of thinking of the public good is put over Directly political material mainly takes the form of stories about heroic deeds performed during the anti-Japanese or civil wars, or a small number of stories in which life before and after 1949 are contrasted. The main message is the importance of the Communist Party, without which the improvements would have been impossible. (Price, 1979: 122)

Other contents include moralistic stories and fables; scientific passages; some anti-imperialistic diatribes, and biographies of great figures, such as Lenin or James Watt. Price's (1979) study of experimental English textbooks used in Tianjin in 1965 concentrated more on the pedagogical aspects, which, he found, were influenced by moves towards oral language production (Audiolingualism) to replace the former emphasis on grammatical rules. His later (1992) analysis focuses on the moral-political messages about patriotism, socialism and discipline in textbooks for moral education at the beginning of the 1990s. He comments that the principal aim is to justify past and present policies, rather than preparing the students for the future.

The *political*, *moral* and *nil* categories have been refined in this study because, in the course of the analysis, it became clear that not all the messages in the passages fitted comfortably in the three original categories, and these

categories did not adequately discriminate between moral and political messages. For example, some passages about a 'healthy' lifestyle (such as descriptions of young people rising early, working diligently and helping others) were placed in the context of supporting a particular political movement; others did not have a political connection. The new categorization (Table 1.4) allows a distinction to be made between the two kinds of message. Three major categories (*political*, *moral* and *nil*) and three minor categories to distinguish between different genres of political message (*attitudes*, *information* and *role model*) are used — although some passages carry more than one message, and from more than one category. For the purposes of this study, a *moral* message is defined as one which promotes a mode of social behaviour, but which does not have an overt political connotation, while a *political* message is connected to ideological values. *Nil* means that there is no obvious political or moral message being conveyed. To study the messages in the textbooks, the analysis identifies *discourse units*, which are defined as any extended stretch of language oriented towards holistic communication, such as a story, a dialogue (including a communicative drill), or an anecdote. On occasions, a sequence of closely connected discourse units, such as a number of dialogues on a similar theme presented together in a lesson, were treated as a single unit for purposes of analysis.

Table 1.4 Categories for analysing political and moral messages in textbooks

Category	Description
Nil	the passage presents information or language practice (such as a dialogue) with no obvious moral or political message
Moral (M)	the message is concerned with promoting modes of social behaviour (such as a healthy lifestyle, good hygiene or courtesy), or attitudes (e.g., through fables), but there are no obvious political connotations
Political	the message is concerned with transmitting 'red' values or socialist ideology by trying to shape the reader's attitude, by providing politicized information or by projecting exemplary behaviour that has its roots in desirable 'red' values
<i>Political attitudes (Pa)</i>	the message aims to instil socialist ideological viewpoints, patriotism, loyalty to the CCP, its institutions and leaders, or to create negative images of other countries or societies (including pre-1949 China)
<i>Political information (Pi)</i>	the message provides information about aspects of society, such as agriculture, industry, science and technology, and suggests that there is a political motivation or link to the successes and achievements identified in these areas
<i>Political model (Pm)</i>	the passage provides examples of behaviour by ordinary people for emulation as displaying appropriate political attitudes; or of behaviour by leaders, for creating a positive image of their thoughts and deeds, and/or for emulation

The messages were categorized and counted. A predominance of political messages in a textbook series, for example, would indicate that the curriculum was influenced by the politicized climate of the time. As noted above, such an analysis is subjective, so a validation exercise was conducted to enhance the data reliability. Two specialists, one in the field of discourse analysis and the other in textbook analysis, categorized the messages in twenty-five passages. Their decisions with regard to the three main categories (i.e., 'nil', 'moral' and 'political') fully matched my own. There were some minor, insignificant discrepancies over the subcategorization ('political attitude', 'political information' and 'political model'), but after discussion, a consensus over the interpretation of the messages was reached, and no changes to my classifications were deemed necessary.

The choice of vocabulary in a series can also reflect particular moral or political messages. To investigate this aspect, the study adopts a word-list drawn up by an American educator, Edward L. Thorndike, reprinted in Thorndike and Lorge (1944: 267–74). This word-list identified 1,000 most commonly used words in textbooks, school readers, the Bible and English classics intended for children. Although other word-lists exist (e.g., Van Ek, 1980), Thorndike's list is considered the most appropriate, as it was used, *faute de mieux*, for reference by the PEP from the 1950s until the 1980s for selecting the vocabulary to be included in various series (Liu, 1995), and at different levels (Dzau, 1990). The PEP did not use the list indiscriminately: other words not on the list were included because of their specific cultural, political or economic importance. Accordingly, this study identifies those vocabulary items in textbooks that were not taken from Thorndike's list. Those extra vocabulary items may reflect dominant influences on curriculum developers in the PEP at the time. For example, the identification of a large number of vocabulary items with political meanings suggests that the textbook series reflect a time of politicization and might reveal the main political themes promoted at the time. In analysing this aspect, the non-Thorndike vocabulary items are quantified and a general estimate of the percentage with political connotations is provided. An exact figure cannot be provided, as connotations are context-dependent: for instance, *worker* could be construed in certain contexts as highly politically charged, but in others much less so.

Time frame

The main time frame of the study is the period after the founding of the PRC, but to understand the problematic nature of English as a school subject and the rationale for this subject, Chapter 2 of this book starts in the Qing dynasty, as the origins of the diverse roles of English in China lie in the Opium War of 1839–42. The war comprised an aggressive clash of cultures.

At that time, Britain, seeking to open up China for trade by creating a market for opium, met resistance from the Chinese government, who viewed foreigners as barbarians (Liao, 1990). The ensuing military struggle revealed the technological superiority of the British and resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, which granted territorial and trading rights to the British. This defeat, and the ensuing seizure of Chinese territory by Britain and other Western powers in the following decades, were major humiliations. The process of selective assimilation was propounded by scholars in the 'Self-Strengthening Movement' during the second half of the nineteenth century, with a view to preserving China's cultural heritage while placing the country on an equal technological and economic footing with others. The principle was labelled 'Study China for essence, study the West for practical usage' (*zhongxue weiti, xixue weiyong*). Scholars recognized that this principle necessitated the study of foreign languages to gain access to Western ideas (Teng and Fairbank, 1979). The Qing dynasty, mortally wounded by internal weakness and external pressures, succumbed. During this time, state policy gradually opened the sluice gate from very restricted engagement with the language, which avoided any form of contact other than for trade and diplomatic negotiation, to one of controlled appropriation, whereby China sought to learn English in order to access technological knowledge for self-protection.

The Republican era was marked by efforts to establish a new state in a less hostile international environment with regard to English-speaking countries. The debate centred less on how to defeat the forces of external aggression and of reform, and more on how to preserve the cultural heritage, the Chinese essence, in the vacuum created by the overthrow of the last emperor. The study of English was controversial because it acted as a conduit for the introduction of new philosophies, religions and social theories. In the event, it was the synthesis of foreign ideas (Marxist-Leninist Theory) with Chinese philosophy (Mao Zedong Thought) that prevailed after the trauma of the Anti-Japanese War (1937–45) and the civil war between the CCP and the Nationalist Party — *Guomindang*, or *Kuomintang* (KMT).

Policies of the CCP, which took power after the civil war ended in 1949, may be seen as an extension of the Self-Strengthening Movement. Two of its declared aims were the ending of oppression in China by foreign countries, and the establishment of a completely independent Chinese nation (Brandt, Schwartz and Fairbank, 1952). Since 1949, these goals have been vigorously pursued, with the elimination of foreign colonies and settlements, and the introduction of various political and economic programmes to bolster patriotic sentiments and the nation's wealth. However, the economically 'underdeveloped' nature of China has meant that the English language still represents a conduit for acquiring the necessary technological expertise and for fostering international trade. The founding father of the PRC, Mao

Zedong, advocated *yang wei zhong yong* ('let foreign things serve China') as a key strategy in the nation's development, which is in line with the maxim of the Self-Strengtheners quoted above. On the other hand, some elements of the CCP have embraced at times the anti-foreignist and anti-English language stance that is uneasy about the presence of English Language in the school curriculum: to them, English bears unsavoury connotations of capitalism and imperialism, and embodies other undesirable moral values. The conflicts between the pragmatism of the Self-Strengthening Movement and the conservatism of the isolationists have affected the role and status of English Language in the school curriculum.

Five distinct phases — 1949–60, 1961–66, 1966–76, 1977–93 and 1993 onwards — form the basis for the chapters in this book (Chapters 3 to 7) that analyse the English curriculum in the post-1949 period. Each of these phases was associated with a major initiative at the macro-level, such as a drive towards modernization, a radical revolutionary movement or the promulgation of an education policy. These phases were also marked by the publication of new syllabuses and/or textbook resources that differ, in terms of their content and the processes of curriculum development that went into their production, from those of the preceding phase. The final chapter, Chapter 8, summarizes the trends arising from the study and discusses some of their implications.

The book naturally has limitations on its scope. I have already mentioned that the focus is on the junior secondary school curriculum, although passing references are made to the primary school curriculum, as well as the senior secondary school and various tertiary curricula. Likewise, it is mainly concerned with the work of the PEP, as the central agency responsible for curriculum design and, until 1993, solely responsible for producing textbooks and other resources. Since 1993, and during the Cultural Revolution, other agencies have produced materials on a regional basis. This study incorporates an analysis of some aspects of the English Language curriculum that operated during the Cultural Revolution, because there was no PEP-developed curriculum available at that time. Although there was difficulty in obtaining textbooks produced during the Cultural Revolution, friends in China were able to supply some incomplete sets that, while not permitting a full analysis, are sufficient to allow for some conclusions to be drawn. However, for the post-1993 period, I have chosen not to study the teaching materials produced by agencies other than the PEP, because of the dominance and influence of the PEP series throughout the country. While a limitation, this decision does allow for greater historical coherence in the study. Furthermore, this study is concerned with just two, albeit important, aspects of the English Language curriculum in China — the processes of development, and the product of these processes in the form of the syllabus and accompanying published resources. The questions of school-based implementation of the curriculum and strategies of teaching and learning actually employed in the classroom are not discussed in detail; nor

are issues concerning assessment. These important questions would be a massive undertaking in the vastly diversified context of China, particularly if they incorporated an historical dimension.

Notes

CHAPTER 1

1. To distinguish between the language and the school subject, this book uses 'English language' for the former and 'English Language' for the latter.
2. Details of the data collection are as follows. Liu Daoyi: 10–13 June 1994 (informal discussions); 16 August 1994 (discussions and tour of PEP archives); 15 December 1995 (semi-structured interview); 16 December 1995 (informal discussion); 18–22 May 1996 (discussions); 22 May 1996 (semi-structured interview); 6 November 1996 (discussion); 3 April 1997, 22 July 1997, 25 November 1997 (letters responding to queries); 15 May 1998 (discussion); 21 May 1998 (discussion). Most of our interactions were in English. Liu Daoyi also read and commented on my PhD thesis that forms the basis for this book. Tang Jun: 12 July 1995 (22-page memoir and a letter, both in Chinese, responding to queries); 22 March 1998 (letter in English responding to queries). In both instances, Tang Jun also liaised with Ying Manrong and Fan Ying, clarifying issues concerning the 1957 curriculum. Liu Jinfang: 17 December 1997 (discussion); 15 May 1998 (semi-structured interview). Interactions were conducted in English and Chinese (for reiteration and clarification). Neville Grant: 18–30 June 1998 (email correspondence). During our periodical meetings over more than ten years, Grant took an interest in my study and offered useful insights and lines of investigation. My own reflections on the development of the 1993 curriculum were written up as a journal article (i.e., Adamson, 1995).

CHAPTER 3

1. Tang Jun, memoir, 12 July 1995.
2. In a discussion with Tang Jun, reported in Tang Jun, letter, 22 March 1998.
3. Tang Jun, memoir, 12 July 1995.
4. In a discussion with Tang Jun, reported in Tang Jun, letter, 22 March 1998.
5. In a discussion with Tang Jun, reported in Tang Jun, letter, 12 July 1995.
6. Bibliographical details of textbooks are found in a separate section of the References at the end of this book.

7. In a discussion with Tang Jun, reported in Tang Jun, letter, 12 July 1995.
8. Interview, 15 December 1995.
9. Memoir, 12 July 1995.
10. Letter, 12 July 1995.
11. Interview, 15 May 1998.
12. Memoir, 12 July 1995.
13. Memoir, 12 July 1995.
14. Series Three, Book 7 Introduction, p. 2 (in translation).
15. Tang Jun, letter, 12 July 1995.
16. Tang Jun, letter, 12 July 1995.

CHAPTER 4

1. The evidence for this chapter is mainly derived from analysis of the textbook resources and the syllabus produced during the phase, and from the reminiscences of Tang Jun, who joined the PEP from Beijing Foreign Languages Institute in 1960.
2. Confirmed by Tang Jun (letter, 15 May 1998) and Liu Daoyi (informal discussion, 21 May 1998).
3. Memoir, 12 July 1995.
4. Memoir, 12 July 1995.
5. Informal discussion, 21 May 1998.
6. Memoir, 12 July 1995.
7. Letter, 22 March 1998.
8. Letter, 22 March 1998.
9. Liu Daoyi, informal discussion, 15 May 1998.
10. Liu Jinfang, interview, 15 May 1998.
11. Interview, 22 May 1996.
12. Memoir, 12 July 1995.
13. Letter, 21 July 1995.

CHAPTER 5

1. Interview, 15 May 1998.

CHAPTER 6

1. Liu Jinfang, interview, 15 May 1998.
2. Liu Jinfang, interview, 15 May 1998.
3. Liu Daoyi, interview, 15 December 1995.
4. Liu Daoyi, interview, 15 December 1995.
5. Liu Jinfang, interview, 15 May 1998.
6. Liu Jinfang, interview, 15 May 1998.
7. Tang Jun, letter, 22 March 1998.
8. Extracted and translated from PEP, 1978: 23–7.
9. Tang Jun, letter, 22 March 1998.

10. Liu Jinfang, interview, 15 May 1998.
11. Liu Jinfang, interview, 15 May 1998.
12. Liu Jinfang, interview, 15 May 1998.
13. Liu Daoyi, interview, 15 December 1995; Tang Jun, memoir, 12 July 1995.
14. Liu Jinfang, interview 15 May 1998.
15. Liu Daoyi, interview, 15 December 1995.
16. Liu Daoyi, interview, 15 May 1998.
17. Liu Jinfang, interview, 15 May 1998.

CHAPTER 7

1. Grant, email, 25 June 1998.
2. Liu Daoyi, interview, 22 May 1996.
3. Grant, email, 25 June 1998.
4. Liu Daoyi, interview, 22 May 1996.
5. Liu Daoyi, interview, 22 May 1996.
6. Liu Daoyi, interview, 22 May 1996.
7. Liu Daoyi, interview, 22 May 1996.
8. Liu Daoyi, interview, 22 May 1996.
9. Liu Daoyi, interview, 22 May 1996.
10. Liu Daoyi, interview, 22 May 1996.
11. Liu Daoyi, interview, 22 May 1996.
12. Liu Daoyi, interview, 22 May 1996.

CHAPTER 8

1. Liu Jinfang, interview, 15 May 1998.

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